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## FLORIDA MAY FREEZE NEW H-1B VISA HIRES AT UNIVERSITIES FOR A YEAR

**Florida's university system is proposing one-year bar on new hires using H-1B visas, following a directive from Governor Ron DeSantis**

### FLORIDA GOVERNOR BEHIND THE MOVE

The Florida Board of Governors is scheduled to review and potentially introduce the policy change on January 29, *Politico* reported. If approved by the full board, it would enter a 14-day public comment period before final implementation. This stems from an October 2025 directive by Governor Ron DeSantis, who wanted a halt on "H-1B abuse"

### PROPOSAL WON'T AFFECT EXISTING H-1Bs

- The freeze applies across the entire State University System of Florida, covering major institutions such as the University of Florida, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and others
- The policy would not affect existing H-1B visa holders already employed at these universities, it only blocks new recruitment

**600**

**EMPLOYEES OF FLORIDA'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ARE ON H-1B VISA**


CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

PM Narendra Modi with NDA alliance partners, including AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, at a poll rally at Maduranthakam on Friday | SHIBA PRASAD SAHU

# TN will have 'double engine' NDA govt after polls, says PM

Says TN got ₹3L cr from Centre in 11 yrs, huge crowd shows state is ready for change

SUBASHINI VIJAYAKUMAR @ Chennai

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday kicked off the NDA's campaign for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections at Maduranthakam, urging voters to opt for a "double-engine government" and asserting that coordination between the state and the Centre was essential to attract investments and accelerate development.

"Bharat is becoming a destination for investors and is signing big deals. At this time, it is essential to have an NDA double-engine government — one that is cordial with the Central government. Only then will it become easier for investments to reach the state," Modi said.

Even as AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami has been stressing that his party will win majority on its own and there won't be any need to share power with allies in the government, Modi repeatedly referred to the prospect of an "NDA government" or "NDA-BJP government" assuming power in the state after the polls during his speech at the event.

The rally effectively pushed Tamil Nadu into election mode, with senior NDA leaders sharing the stage and projecting unity ahead of the polls. Among them was T T V Dhinakaran, leader of Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, who shook hands with Palaniswami, indicating that their focus now was to unseat the ruling DMK from power.

Addressing the gathering, Dhinakaran said he had joined the NDA without hesitation. "We want to remove corrupt family rule and restore the governance ideals of Puratchi Thalaivar MGR and Amma. AMMK cadres will work for NDA's victory," he assured Modi and Palaniswami who were on the stage. Edappadi K Palaniswami also addressed Dhinakaran as "brother" during his speech.

Stating that the countdown to "send the DMK government home" had begun, Prime Minister Modi said senior NDA leaders had gathered with that single resolve.

> **The people of TN are now referring to the DMK as a CMC (Corruption, Mafia and Crime government). The DMK government is functioning for the benefit of a single family**
>
> Narendra Modi, PM

### 'DMK, allies insulted HC'

Speaking on Thirupparankundram issue, Modi said BJP leaders had stood up for the rights of devotees, but the DMK and its allies have insulted the HC to protect their vote bank. "They (DMK) are against TN's culture," the PM said

### 'Only BJP can develop state'

Corruption by the successive CPM and Congress governments in Kerala has stifled the state's growth; only the BJP can bring development but it needs a decisive mandate, Modi said

## Draws Ahmedabad parallel to rev up BJP's Kerala cadre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ T'Puram

RECALLING that the BJP's 1987 victory in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation paved the way for decades of its rule in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the party's win in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation would trigger a similar "transformation" in Kerala, reflecting public trust in the BJP's development and governance model.

Virtually kick-starting the NDA's assembly poll campaign in Kerala with a rally in Thiruvananthapuram, Modi said the BJP was a marginal force in the 1980s.

"In 1987, we won the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for the first time. Our journey began in one city. Similarly, in Kerala, our beginnings have started with Thiruvananthapuram," he said.

Modi launched a scathing attack on both the ruling CPM-led LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF, accusing them of ruining the state in collusion with each other for the past many decades. Alleging an unholy alliance between both fronts, he said it was time to break the nexus by electing an NDA government, which would be "pro-people" and "pro-development."

Accusing the LDF of harming the customs and traditions of the Sabarimala temple, Modi said if the BJP assumes power in the state, then all the culprits would be put behind bars. "This is Modi's guarantee," he said.

He also targeted opposition UDF, referring to its main constituent Congress as 'MMC' or 'Muslim League Maoist Congress'.

# HC gives green signal to bike taxis in K'taka

**A bike taxi should display vehicle permit, as well as driver details, including his photo, name, DL, badge particulars, and ID card issued by the police, accessible to the passenger**

K'taka High Court

### 'Prohibition violates Art 19(6)'

HC said the ban on bike-taxis is not compliant with Art 19(6). "A blanket ban on issuing contract carriage permits to motorcycles cannot be considered as a reasonable restriction..."

YATHIRAJU @ Bengaluru

GIVING the green signal to bike taxi services in the state, the Karnataka High Court on Friday directed the state government to consider the applications filed by transportation technology aggregators to register motorcycles as transport vehicles and to grant permits to operate as contract carriages. "Whilst the concerned authorities are not precluded from examining relevant aspects for vehicle registration and issuance of permits, the same will not be denied on the ground that motorcycles cannot be operated as transport vehicles or contract carriages," said a division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Joshi in the order pronounced on a batch of appeals.

"We may also note that Rule 7 of the Karnataka On-demand Transportation Technology Aggregators Rules specifies certain conditions to be complied with by every taxi, including the display of a board inside the taxi containing the vehicle permit and the driver's details. There cannot be a display board inside the motorcycle. The said Rule must be understood to mean that the bike taxi should display the vehicle permit, as well as the driver's details, including his photograph, name, driving licence, badge particulars, and ID card issued by the police authorities, which are accessible to the passenger," the court said.

The court clarified that the Regional Transport Authority may impose conditions as it deems necessary, as attached to the permits, in accordance with the law and taking into account provisions of Section 74(2) of the Motor Vehicles Act.

The court passed the order while allowing a batch of appeals filed by ANI Technologies Pvt Ltd which operates Ola, Uber India Systems Pvt Ltd, Roppen Transportation Services Pvt Ltd., Bike Taxi Welfare Association and other individuals. They had filed the appeals against a single-judge order on April 2, 2025 that had ruled that Ola, Uber and Rapido cannot offer bike taxis on their platforms unless the state government notifies the relevant guidelines under Section 93 of the Motor Vehicles Act. **P2**

## Steel sector cartelisation under CCI lens

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

INDIA'S largest steel companies —Tata Steel, JSW Steel and state-run SAIL and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) — disclosed their pricing plans to rivals and coordinated production cuts to reduce supplies, according to a confidential antitrust investigation report seen by *Reuters*. It was earlier reported that CCI found 28 firms colluded on steel prices, meaning they could face hefty fines.

The investigation report by the Competition Commission of India into the four major companies that has not been made public shows the commission reviewed dozens of WhatsApp chats, including from groups named "Friends of Steel", "Tycoons" and "Steel Live Market" that were seized during 2022 industry raids. It analysed pricing changes, sales and production patterns.

Tata Steel, JSW Steel and state-run Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) colluded during 2018-2023, the report says. Tata Steel said it "denies any wrongdoing", while others did not respond to queries from *Reuters*.

**JUMBO FEAST**

A herd of five wild elephants raid a sugarcane farm in Maddur taluk, Mandya district, on Friday | EXPRESS

**DEEPAM ROW**

## SC seeks reply on plea to order ASI to take over hill shrine

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday sought response from the Union Government, Tamil Nadu government and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on a writ petition filed by the Hindu Dharma Parishad seeking directions to the ASI to take control of the entire Thirupparankundram Lord Murugan Subramaniya Swamy Temple near Madurai and daily lighting of lamp on top of the 'deepathoon' (stone pillar) atop the hill

**FULL REPORT: P7**

## 'Duppa engine' will not run in TN, says Stalin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

TAMIL NADU CM MK Stalin on Friday launched a political attack on the BJP-led NDA, rejecting PM Narendra Modi's "double engine" pitch and reiterated a list of long-pending demands of the state which he said the centre continues to ignore. Responding on 'X' to Modi's remarks at the rally in Maduranthakam, Stalin said the "double-engine government" concept would not work in the state. "The so-called 'double engine' will not run in Tamil Nadu. That 'duppa engine' (waste engine) will not work here," he said.

Stating that Tamil Nadu had recorded historic growth despite what he described as obstacles created by the BJP-led union government, Stalin urged Modi to compare development indicators. "When compared to your 'double-engine' states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, it is the states where your 'duppa engine' has not entered — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka and West Bengal — that are soaring in development," he said.

The CM further alleged that the BJP's "betrayal" of the Tamil language and Tamil Nadu would not be forgotten, asserting that the state would never bow to what he termed the "arrogance of Delhi". Earlier in the day, hours ahead of the PM's public meeting in Maduranthakam, Stalin released a strongly worded social media post questioning the centre on a range of welfare, development and federal issues.

**Resolution on VB-G RAM G**

TN Assembly passed a resolution, urging the centre to alter VB-G RAM G & continue with the MGNREGA to protect rural people's livelihood

**HIGH DRAMA IN K'TAKA HOUSE**

**OPPN WANTS HARIPRASAD SUSPENDED**

Opposition BJP members in the Council in Karnataka on Friday sought suspension of Congress MLC BK Hariprasad for allegedly disrespecting Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, while he was walking out of the Assembly after just a two-line address to the joint session on Thursday | **P4**

**EXCISE SCAM, MIN MUST QUIT: OPPN**

Members of opposition BJP on the floor of the House in the Karnataka Assembly on Friday demanded the resignation of Excise Minister RB Timmapur, alleging that the Cong govt is dispatching money looted from the department to Assam, Kerala and TN, which are facing Assembly elections soon | **P4**

## Left point on Sonia in gold row upsets Rahul

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

WITH the controversy over the alleged 'Sabarimala gold theft' intensifying, Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** is learnt to be 'deeply upset' with the party's Kerala leaders over the manner in which the issue was handled, particularly after Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson and his mother Sonia Gandhi's name figured in the political sparring.

According to sources, Rahul felt that sections of the state Congress leadership adopted a short-sighted approach in pursuing the controversy, allowing the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF to drag his mother's name and sharpen its counter-offensive.

The slugfest intensified after photos surfaced purportedly showing Unnikrishnan Potty, the prime accused in the Sabarimala gold theft case, along with Sonia Gandhi and Congress MPs Adoor Prakash and Anto Antony. The CPI(M) and the Kerala government seized on the images to allege links between the Congress leadership and the accused, a charge the Congress dismissed it as a smear campaign. Sources said Rahul believed that the Congress's aggressive campaign strategy forced the Left to intensify the issue and turn it into a larger political confrontation.

The Sabarimala gold loss cases relate to the alleged misappropriation of the precious metal from the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) idols and sanctum sanctorum door frames at the Lord Ayyappa temple. A Special Investigation Team probing the cases has arrested 12 people, including Potty and two former presidents of the Travancore Devaswom Board in connection with the matter.

The issue dominated proceedings in the Kerala assembly this week, triggering heated exchanges with ministers, including V Sivankutty and M B Rajesh. While referring to the photograph appearing to show the accused with Sonia Gandhi, Rajesh said that the photo showed "the thief and the person who pocketed the loot" together.

## State govt aims to replace med health officers with engineers

KARTHIK KK @ Mysuru

IN a move that has triggered strong opposition, the Urban Development Department has decided to indirectly abolish the post of medical health officer at all municipal corporations across Karnataka, including Mysuru City Corporation, except the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA formerly BBMP).

Under the new arrangement, the responsibilities of health officers will be transferred to superintendent engineers or executive engineers (environment) instead of doctors, which has irked medical professionals and experts who call it unscientific. The GO has reportedly been communicated to municipal commissioners, though a formal order is expected soon.

The decision has been flagged not just by medical professionals who are currently serving, but also senior councilors and former mayors who argue that removing medically qualified professionals from a public health role will severely impact urban health governance.

Traditionally, medical health officers are qualified doctors, responsible for safeguarding public health. Their duties include inspection of hotels, lodges, eateries, malls, hostels, PGs, marriage halls and others, ensuring hygiene and imposing fines. They also oversee sanitation, manage sanitation workers and monitor waste disposal.

A former Mysuru mayor from Congress said the role of a health officer extends far beyond sanitation. "During outbreaks of diseases like dengue or cholera in localities, medical expertise, guidance and timely intervention are critical. Engineers cannot replace doctors in such situations. Will take up this issue with CM Siddaramaiah," he said.

Former corporator and BJP leader BV Manjunath said the effective role played by health officers especially during Covid should be remembered. "Health officer teams have efficiently handled biomedical waste management, regulation of plastic sale and usage, sanitisation drives, medicine distribution and other essential health-related tasks. Now with Mysuru moving towards becoming Greater Mysuru, appointing environmental engineers instead of medical professionals to this post makes no sense," he said.

Objections have been raised in the Hubballi-Dharwad Corporation too and a few representations have already been submitted to withdraw the order.